



Sveriges lantbruksuniversitet
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

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Agricultural Sciences

Power use in water distribution under Islamic State

– Testing the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony on the case
of Manbij, Syria

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Abstract

This research looks at hydropolitics under Islamic State (IS). The research departs from the belief that power asymmetries determine to a significant extent the political distributional issue of ‘who gets what, when, where and why’ and who is left out. IS has also exploited their power potential in order to implement their decision on water allocation and distribution. To analyse this the research draws upon the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony. Based on the analysis of interview data, the research argues that IS loyalists have unconditionally access to water whereas non-loyalists face several constraints, in particular financial constraints. The power used by IS that determines this outcome are in particular material and ideational power. Ideational power can be observed in the fact that IS has constructed a belief that thinking or speaking outside the discursive hegemony will have serious consequences. This belief became the sanctioned discourse after a process of construction. The construction can be seen as an active process through the use of for example threats, and as a passive process as the narrative is based on the group’s reputation. On the other hand however, this reputation would not have existed without the offensive and shocking use of material power, which constructed and maintained the reputation. This shows that power in one dimension strengthens power in another dimension. Finally, this study serves as a basis for discussion about how appropriate the framework is for understanding the subnational level and non-state actors as hegemons. In relation to this, it can be argued that the framework was not perfectly suitable as the interview data mainly gave insights on the consequences rather than the process of water distribution. However, this does not necessarily relate to the level and actors but rather to the method. In addition, the research points out some key matters that can be further discussed in relation to the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony. It is argued that the framework can benefit from an in-depth study of perceptions.

Keywords: Islamic State, hydropolitics, power, hegemony, the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony, Syria

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Abbreviations

AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
FSA	Free Syrian Army
HH-Framework	Framework of Hydro-Hegemony
IS	Islamic State
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISW	Institute for the Study of War
LWRG	London Water Research Group
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
NSA/NSAs	Non-State Actor(s)
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
RC	Revolutionary Council
SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
VNSA/VNSAs	Violent Non-State Actor(s)

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1 Introduction

Literature on hydropolitics has been dominated by two paradigms: the idea that water scarcity leads to conflict and the idea that it leads to cooperation (Selby & Hoffmann 2014; Conker 2014; Warner & Zawahri 2012). Several researchers have criticised those two narratives. Selby and Hoffmann (2014) argued for example that the possibility of water-related conflicts does not have to be discounted but that those conflicts are principally shaped by political forces and cannot simply be reduced to water alone. LWRG members Cascão and Zeitoun (2010, p.29) argued conformingly:

“The consistent association of hydropolitics with conflict or security issues has led to an impoverished debate and hindered understanding of hydropolitics as a dynamic and ongoing process involving several other key dynamics – notably society, environment and culture”.

Members of the LWRG are trying to derive from the ‘impoverished debate’ by arguing for an ‘interaction paradigm’ in which conflict and cooperation are seen as ever-present and perhaps even two sides of the same coin (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, p.29). Power is considered central in shaping conflictual and cooperative relations. Power asymmetries, according to Cascão and Zeitoun (2010, p.27), determine to a significant extent the political distributional issue of “who gets what, when, where and why” and who is left out. This question, first raised by Lasswell and complemented with Markovitz’ “who is left out”, reflects politics in its broadest sense (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010).

The Framework of Hydro-Hegemony (HH-framework), developed by Zeitoun and Warner, then is used as an analytical tool to clarify and test the role of power in the political distributional issue (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010). It looks at “the success of a basin riparian in imposing a discourse, preserving its interests and impeding changes to a convenient status quo” (Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March). This reveals that the framework goes beyond the overt forms of power (e.g. military force, material capacities), which is the way power is understood in the water conflict/cooperation discourses. Instead, the hydro-hegemony discourse shows that water disputes are mostly subject of covert power. Although not precisely equivalent, overt and covert power can also be referred to as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ power (Cascão and Zeitoun 2010). While hard power mainly relates to material resources and the use of force, soft power embraces an array of immaterial, non-violent and co-optative power manifestations. Although non-violent, soft power is not necessarily positive or based on consensus, it is the power to repel away from certain issues and maintain the status quo in favour of the applier, for example by persuasion and discursive framing (Zeitoun et al. 2011; Warner et al. 2013). A question asked by Lukes summarises this power rightly: “is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have – that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?” (Lukes 2005 in Zeitoun et al. 2011, p.161).

The work of the LWRG has been very inspiring to me. Its constructivist approach aligns with my personal assumptions as well as the fundamentals of my master’s program Environmental Communication and Management for which this research is conducted. Besides, it is a fortuitous coincidence that most of their work has been focused on the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA), which has been the focus of my previous studies. However, it is not really a coincidence that the framework is mainly applied to case studies from this region; the HH-framework appeared particularly useful in semi-arid and highly politicised or securitised conflicts and areas (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010). Accordingly,

the Hydro-Hegemonic Framework has been criticised for not being as useful in other areas. Another critique is its state-centrism. This critique made me wonder if the framework could also be useful for a non-state actor (NSA) and on a subnational level of hydropolitics.

Seeing the Islamic State (IS) increase their power along the Euphrates River in Syria and Iraq, I decided to make IS subject of my research. Besides choosing to focus on IS because it is a NSA, another major driver in the choice for IS in combination with the HH-framework has been that the group is well known for its violence. However, like writers of the LWRG, I suppose a hegemon always has two tools at its disposal that cannot really go without each other, or following Hannah Arendt, “power based on force only is not real power” (Warner & Zawahri 2012, p.218). Also in literature on Violent Non State Actors (VNSAs) it is shown that violence is not the only facet in consolidating control, but instead ideological principles and in particular religious-based ones are indicated to be fundamental (Aydinli 2015). Finally, with this approach I believe to return to Gramsci’s definition of Hegemony, which inspired the HH-framework of the LWRG. As Trottier explains: “the concept of Hegemony was developed by Gramsci in order to explain how a state managed to assert its power over a population living in a given territory” (Trottier n.d., p.2).

The case I decided to research is Manbij, an agricultural district in Syria along the Euphrates River. This area triggered my interest as it was used as an example of successful governance after the withdrawal of the regime (Abboud 2014; Reuter & Adhun 2016; Ali 2015), as well as one of few areas where IS fully deployed its state apparatus after taking over from the opposition forces (Caris & Reynolds 2014; Turkmani 2015). Furthermore, I saw the opportunity to talk with people from Manbij in Şanlıurfa, Turkey.

My research question is: *How and to whom did the Islamic State distribute water in Manbij?* This question combines Laswell’s question “who got what, when, where and why” and the added “who was left out” with the case study of Manbij and the Islamic State. Manbij is the ‘where’, ‘when’ is at the time of the Islamic State, who gets what¹ and who is left out will become clear in the analysis and why those people got or did not get water will also become clear in the analysis, drawing upon the HH-framework. Aligned with hydro-hegemony literature, Laswell’s *why* is thus not referring to purpose but to the competition: *why this outcome?* Hence the research question asks *how*, referring to the power exploitation in water distribution. For “power relations between riparians are the prime determinants of the degree of control over water resources that each riparian attains”, as Zeitoun and Warner (2006, p.406) write². As the HH-framework reveals a riparian’s exploitative power, I thought the framework would be helpful in answering the question.

The research aims to increase understanding on IS’ decisions on the allocation and distribution of water resources and to shed light on the kinds of power IS used to implement those decisions, from the perspective of the subjected. The project will also serve as a basis for a discussion about how appropriate the HH-framework is for understanding the domestic level and non-state actors as hegemons.

As said, this study mainly draws upon the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony developed by the LWRG and will be further explained in chapter 2. Then, in Chapter 3 the scope of the study is explained as well as the used methodology. In chapter 4 a short introduction into the Syrian war is given. Also, the Islamic State is introduced by deliberating on its emergence and its water strategies and governance. Furthermore, Manbij is introduced. Chapter 5 comprises of the analysis of subnational hydropolitics in Manbij based on the interview data. The major points of the analysis are also briefly summarised. Finally, chapter 6 concludes the research and deliberates on the findings on the use of the HH-framework for the analysis of non-state actors and the subnational level of hydropolitics.

¹ Note that the distributional issue is not solely about water quantity but also about quality, although this is not (explicitly) addressed in this research (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010).

² They added: “Riparian position and the potential to exploit the water through hydraulic infrastructures also have some influence but are not determining except insofar as they are power related” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.406).

2 Theoretical Framework

As written in the introduction, hydropolitical literature has been dominated by a water wars and water cooperation paradigm. In response, the interaction paradigm was introduced in which conflict and cooperation are seen as two sides of the same coin. This co-existence can be explained by political factors and power dynamics. To analyse power dynamics, the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony was developed. This chapter explains the framework and how it relates to this research.

When talking about hydropolitics, I refer to the field defined by Turton YEAR 7as “the authoritative allocation of values in society with respect to water” (in Conker 2014, p.7).

2.1 Introduction of a framework

When the early twentieth century Italian Marxist Gramsci tried to understand the weakness of the Communist movement in his society, he introduced the concept of hegemony (Selby 2007). Hegemony explained how a state succeeded in claiming power over a population (Trottier n.d.). According to Selby “the value of the Gramscian theory of hegemony lies in its emphasis on the means through which the state and dominant groups maintain their power over society, and in particular on the ideological, normative and cultural aspects of these state-society relations” (Selby 2007, p.4). The LWRG adopted this emphasis on ‘soft’ or ‘covert’ power, which was not taken into account in the water conflict/cooperation approaches³. As written in the introduction, soft power is the ability to avert certain issues and maintain the status quo in favour of the applier, by using persuasion. Accordingly, hydro-hegemony is defined as “the success of a basin riparian in imposing a discourse, preserving its interests and impeding changes to a convenient status-quo” (Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March).

In 2006 Mark Zeitoun and Jeroen Warner introduced the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony, using the concept of hegemony to analyse power relations between riparian states (cf. between state and populations as Gramsci concerned). The writers argued that “the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony provides a reasonably simple, comprehensive and testable structure, as well as an analytical tool for examining the options of riparians at the river basin level” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.437)

2.2 Power

Zeitoun and Warner point out that “the balance of power ultimately determines riparian interactions over shared resources” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.450). Furthermore, power asymmetries determine to a significant extent “who gets what, when, where and why” and who is left out (Laswell 1936 in Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, p.27).

³ Although, according to Warner, some realists did realise hard power had to be complemented with soft (especially economic) power in order to be a hegemon (Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March).

To measure the power ratio of riparian states, one should look at 1) the geographical position (although this dimension has been a bit overrated⁴, Cascão & Zeitoun 2010); 2) the material power (overall economic, political and military power and international and financial support); 3) the bargaining power (capability of actors to control the rules of the game or status-quo and set agendas); and 4) ideational power ('power over ideas', allowing the hegemon to control perceptions of the distributional conformation of society both domestically as in neighbouring riparian states, reinforcing the hegemon's legitimacy) (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, pp.31–32). Those dimensions form the pillars of hydro-hegemony (figure 1). The amount of power of each dimension determines the success of the resource control strategies, at least in the MENA region (Zeitoun & Warner 2006). The LWRG later noted it is too limiting to examine the four pillars of power separately; in reality they are interrelated and inseparable fields of power (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010). This was also one of my findings after applying the framework. Similarly, I found that strength in one kind of power increases or strengthens power of another kind, as was also pointed out by Cascão and Zeitoun (2010). Furthermore, figure 1 suggests that all forms are evenly powerful, but as Cascão and Zeitoun (2010, p.27) write: "not all forms of power are equal, with material and bargaining power counting more than geographic position or ideational power for instance". While some articles drawing upon the HH-framework have reflected the dimensions in some sort of quantified order, this research does not measure the magnitude of each power dimension but looks at which of the dimensions have been exploited by IS in regard to water distribution.

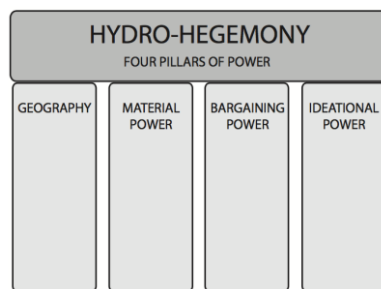


Figure 1 Pillars of Hydro-Hegemony. Source: Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, revised after Zeitoun & Warner 2006

2.3 Aims, strategies and tactics

The general goal of riparian states who find themselves in an unsatisfying or threatening situation is to consolidate control (either for flood-management purposes or to generate hydropower, or to obtain more and better water). Riparians can employ three strategies in order to consolidate control: a) research capture; b) containment; and c) integration. For each strategy there are a number of tactics that can be deployed (Zeitoun & Warner 2006). However, asymmetries do not necessarily have to be played out by those tactics. They can already be evident in "structural inequalities, the lack of control over decisions and an inequitable allocation of the resources or its benefits" (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.439). I discovered the violent reputation of IS can be seen as such a 'structural context' beneficial for IS (although reputation can also be understood in relation to a ideational power/tactics, as the analysis will show).

To explain the strategies and tactics, I mainly obtained information from Zeitoun and Warner's introduction of the Framework. Unless noted otherwise, the following two paragraphs are based on their work from 2006.

The strategy resource capture occurs when "powerful groups within a society... shift resource distribution in their favour" (Homer-Dixon 1999 in Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.444). Common examples in the context of states consolidating control over transboundary rivers are land annexation or the construction of hydraulic dams. The second strategy, containment, seems attractive to hydro-hegemonic states that are aware of the laws concerning transboundary water resources and seek for more covert ways to create or maintain a status quo in their favour. But I found that also a non-state actor ignoring all

⁴ "Riparian position (geography-based power) was found to be relevant only under certain conditions". A group of water professionals found that position can be an advantage *primarily* if combined with material, financial and geopolitical power. (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, p.36)

possible humanitarian and environmental laws may find containment beneficial, as for example the deployment of secret police by IS shows. Integration, finally, can be seen as compliance-producing strategy through consensus (Warner et al. 2013).

To realise the strategies, several tactics can be deployed. The tactics reflect the strengths and exploitative power of the hegemon. A first tactic is *military force*. While the tactic military force is rarely used in water conflicts, the context in which this study takes place is a war and the main subject a violent actor. Hence it will not be surprising that military force is used and not only as a last resort. Another tactic is *covert action*, described as “undercover operations aimed at weakening the political, military or hydraulic apparatus of the competitor, or make a pact with those who will” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.446). *Incentives* are considered as the ‘sticks’ (cf. ‘carrots’) when considering power. This tactic to induce compliance with the hegemon’s preferred state of affairs was believed to be deployed in the form of an agreement between IS and the regime in relation to electricity (see analysis). Based on Napoleoni’s finding that IS has co-opted leaders of local Sunni tribes as partners of cooperation, it appears IS deploys incentives more frequently (Napoleoni 2014). However, this came not to the front in the interviews I conducted and will therefore not be discussed further. *Treaties* were not signalled in the analysis. This tactic entails the signing of agreements aimed at ‘institutionalising the *status quo*’, which the interviewees did not hear of or experience themselves. That also goes for *securitisation* which is “the speech act that legitimises a state to take exceptional measures over an issue by propelling it into the realm of security” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.558). A tactic that however turned out to be very relevant is *knowledge construction*. This is the process of alternative discourse contending and results in actors securing support for “their definition of reality” (Hajer 1997 in Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.448). Knowledge construction may result in a *sanctioned discourse* which means that constraints are imposed upon those who wish to speak or think *outside* of the sanctioned discourse. The sanctioned discourse is the prevailing discourse heard above the others and is by definition endorsed by the hegemon. Finally, there is the tactic *coercion-pressure*. This ‘invisible persuasion’ often comes in the form of threats (of military action, economic sanctions, political isolation) but also includes espionage and propaganda. Coercion-pressure is actually a tactic that does not require much effort but is already ingrained in structure. Hence it is categorised as a tactic of structural power (or coercive power), as I believe it does not fit into any other power dimension (inspired by Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March).

2.4 Counter-hegemony

Symmetries are not irreversible or fixed; power relations and the status quo are constantly contested and challenged (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010). Hence, LWRG academics have also studied the issue of counter-hegemony. The potential for counter-hegemony shows that *every situation is dynamic*. As Collins (2003, in Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.454) pointed out, the absence of a constructive relation may lead the weaker states to take “further action to hedge their bets, reducing their reliance on the hegemonical regimes and perhaps attempting to set up alternative arrangements of their own”. While this research does not include counter-hegemonic analysis, this quote is relevant. It reflects *resistance*, which is also reflected in the analysis. While in counter-hegemony literature this resistance is analysed to say something about the power of the hegemonised, this research looks at resistance to deepen the understanding on hegemon (here IS). Acts of resistance, I believe, reveal citizen’s perceptions (interpretations) on power.

2.5 Criticism: a state-centric view

The hydro-hegemonic discourse has been criticised thoroughly both by the LWRG itself and by outsiders. Perhaps the strongest critique has been the discourse’s focus on states. According to Selby (2007), the state-centric view is at odds with the essential meaning of hegemony as deployed by Gramsci, to whom the LWRG professed debt. Selby argues that this is a realist conception of hegemony and does not harmonise with today’s globalised world. The LWRG acknowledged the critique but argued: “we keep state centrality as a reality, mindful that transnational actors and force also matter” (Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March). Warner added that while realism mainly focuses on overt, ‘hard’ (military)

power, hydro-hegemony owns its uniqueness on the focus on covert, 'soft' (discursive) power (Warner 2016, pers. comm., 16 March). Although the choice for a framework focusing on soft power might seem special for a terrorist group well known for its extreme violence, I do think IS is also a group with a strong ideological focus and that it is therefore interesting to analyse if and how other forms of power are used by IS to consolidate control. More daring about this research, I believe, is to step away from the inter-state and transboundary river focus and instead use the framework for a domestic/subnational analysis of hydropolitics on water allocation (drinking/irrigation) by a non-state actor.

3 Methodology

As written in the introduction, this research seeks to answer the question *how and to whom did the Islamic State distribute water in Manbij?* This chapter is aimed at revealing the major methodological considerations and approaches taken in this research.

3.1 Focus of the study

Conker (2014) defines four foci of the scope of his study: conceptual focus (choice of layer), actors, space and time. Inspired by his extensive and insightful deliberation, I will here also reveal the foci of this study, summarised in table 1.

3.1.1 Layers

According to Mollinga (2001 in Conker 2014) water and politics can be considered in terms of three different levels: inter-state hydropolitics, subnational/domestic hydropolitics and everyday hydropolitics. Two additional or emerging levels that were pointed out by Conker are global politics of water and transnational politics of water. While the HH-framework has mainly been applied to the inter-state level, this study will focus on the subnational/domestic level. This is the level of politics of water resources policy, development and management, on which governments and states formulate and implement water policy (Conker 2014).

3.1.2 Actors

Although governments are central in the subnational level, I suppose any authority engaging itself with resources policy, development, management and implementation can be studied. Accordingly, this study focuses on a violent non-state actor (VNSA), namely the Islamic State (despite its name the group is not considered a sovereign state). I derived the conclusion that IS is a VNSA from Aydinli's framework for analysis of VNSAs (Aydinli 2013). Obviously, the hydropolitics of IS involves the citizens of Manbij as well.

3.1.3 Space

After I had decided to focus on areas along the Euphrates River where IS had established itself, I informed myself about the different options. I learned that Manbij was governed by opposition groups in an exceptional and exemplary way after the regime had withdrawn (see chapter 4), which I think is very interesting. Also, after IS had seized the district, the group established its full governance apparatus. Only in few other places in the proclaimed state of IS such a comprehensive apparatus is also operational. Not unimportant, the district used to have a flourishing agricultural sector and is highly dependent on the Euphrates River as well as the Tishrin Dam that are both (partly) situated in the district. The choice for Manbij was also driven by the opportunities for research.

3.1.4 Time

The main time period under study starts at the time Islamic State came to Manbij, which is January 2014. Other time periods that this study will touch upon (in reflecting the bigger context), are the time that opposition groups governed Manbij (mid 2012 till 2014) and the time of the regime of Hafez al-Assad (1971-2000) and his son and current president Bashar al-Assad (2000-in Manbij mid 2012).

Table 1. The four foci of the scope of this study (inspired by table 2 in Conker 2014)

Conceptual focus	Actor focus	Spatial focus	Temporal focus	Method
Layer of subnational Hydro-politics	Islamic State as main actor exerting material and discursive power capabilities in Manbij, citizens of Manbij	Manbij District (situated on a part of Syria's west bank of the Euphrates River)	Jan. 2014 - early 2016	Structured to semi-structured interviews, analysis

3.2 Methods

Qualitative research, according to Conker (2014), is most consistent with the ontological and epistemological positions of the hydro-hegemony discourse. Hence, I conducted qualitative research to obtain data for analysis. For the background chapter literature study has been done.

3.2.1 Literature

The conducted literature consists mainly of academic papers, followed by reports from think tanks, a number of NGO reports, online articles and (journalistic) books. Some accounts were very helpful in understanding the Islamic State, in particular those from the Institute of the Study of War (ISW). However, I found that on one matter those accounts were strongly contradicted by the accounts of my interviewees, namely the perspectives on IS' state building (see 3.2.5). Concerning this particular example I have tried to interpret the meaning of the contradiction. In general, when I found different sources with contradicting information on the same matter I have aimed to be transparent on the contradiction or level of reliability. Finally, I have read a number of Arabic news articles. As those sources were hard to verify, I decided to use them only as input for interviews.

3.2.2 Interviews

Qualitative interviews are aimed to comprehend the perspectives of the interviewees (Conker 2014). Hence I spent one week in Şanlıurfa (or Urfa), Turkey to conduct interviews. I received assistance from an NGO based in Geneva/Reyhanli, GeoExpertise, whose director Ahmed Haj Asaad is a Syrian with extensive knowledge of the region. Prof. Haj Asaad had asked his young colleague Nur Bekkur to assist me in Turkey, which I accepted gratefully. To have Nur Bekkur with me was very helpful. Being a Syrian herself and representing an NGO, created trust and hence she was the best person to initiate contact with potential interviewees. Also, it was helpful as she could complement me and help me in my language struggles, which will be discussed below. Although only half of the interviews were conducted in person, it was essential to be in Şanlıurfa. Being in Şanlıurfa gave a signal to our contact persons that my assistant and I were serious, it facilitated the process of getting to know more people (the 'snow-ball method') and it allowed to talk with three people whose demands for their own security would not have allowed digital-interviews (e.g. via Skype, phone or e-mail). Table 2 introduces the interviewees. It must be noted that we did not manage to speak with people from Manbij only; we also spoke to people from Kobane (60 km from Manbij city) and Raqqa (135 km from Manbij city and IS' headquarter). Also, none of our interviewees has been in Manbij while IS was in control (except for a few days in the beginning or a short visit later). However, all interviewees said to have family in friends in Manbij. The challenges coming with the interviews will be discussed below, under 3.2.5.

Table 2. Information on Interviewees met in Şanlıurfa, Turkey, early April 2016. Note that the interviewees are also given numbers to shorten the references in the analysis chapter. The names are fictitious.

Interviewee	Date of interview	Place of origin, date left (if known)	Current place of residence	Profession/organisation	Means
1. Tariq	April 5	Manbij city, left January 2014	Gaziantep	Activist local council (military department) of the interim government of Manbij (voluntarily), worked for the FSA, before he worked at a language institute	Digital
2. Qusayr	April 6	Kobane	Şanlıurfa	Human Rights Lawyer, restaurant owner, farmer	Personal
3. Nidal	April 6	Manbij city, left 21 January 2014	Gaziantep	Activist local council (political department) of the interim government of Manbij, researcher, writer and political activist	Digital
4. Khaled	April 7	Manbij, left January 2014	Kobane	Farmer, had been active with the revolutionists (local council or FSA)	Digital (interview stopped after half an hour due to poor connection)
5. Raghda	April 7	Raqqa	Şanlıurfa	Involved in a women's organisation	Personal
6. Dima	April 7	Manbij city, left 16 January 2014	Şanlıurfa	Housewife, mother	Personal
7. Nadia	April 7	Manbij city, left 24 January 2014	Gaziantep	Civil engineer	Digital
8. Adam	April 8	Kobane	Şanlıurfa	Interviewee requested us not to give away too much information, e.g. his profession/organisation	Personal

3.2.3 *Language*

The interviews were conducted in Arabic (Syrian dialect). Holding a bachelor degree in Arabic Language and Culture, I have basic working knowledge of the language. To prevent any major challenges, I gratefully accepted the help of a native speaker who also has knowledge of the region and subject. As this would be the first time to conduct interviews in Arabic, I was not sure what kind of challenges to expect. But while doing I learned that my understanding of what is said was often not fast enough to be immediately ready to ask questions of clarification. Also, a couple of times I could not tell with hundred percent certainty whether a question was fully answered or whether an elusive answer had been given. In those cases it was very helpful that I had chosen for structured interviews, and that I – in a quick glimpse – could notice from my colleague whether a question had been answered or not. However, I did not always stuck to the structure of the questionnaire, as sometimes I felt the urge to ask for more details or when new questions came up. Besides helping me with the interviews, Nur Bekkur sought interviewees and made the appointments. As a native (in both language and culture) letting her do this was definitely most efficient.

Back in the Netherlands I asked another native (and trustworthy, considering the content of the interviews) Arabic to listen with me to the recordings (the notes of the only interview not recorded were translated by Nur Bekkur). He would tell me the translation after every answer and I decided whether I agreed with the translation, when necessary looked up some words in a dictionary and transcribed about 80% of each interview. This was in my opinion the most accurate way considering the limited time available for this part of the research.

3.2.4 *Analytical framework*

Once I had the transcription, the analysis could start. As it was clear to me that IS has been aiming for consolidated control and became the hegemon in water distribution in Manbij (see also chapter 4), I thought it would be most efficient to look at the competition that preceded this outcome. According to the HH-framework, this competition is characterised by water resource control strategies, executed through a variety of tactics. Tactics, in other words, are the implementation acts and take place ‘on the ground’. Rather than the abstract strategies, tactics are directly experienced by the citizens and reflected by their family and friends in the interviews. Accordingly, I thought, identifying tactics would be the most efficient way for analysis. The tactics I tried to find were described in the HH-literature (see chapter 2), but I also tried to look beyond them and identify ‘new’ tactics by looking at acts that seemed to aid IS in consolidating control over water distribution and deciding the outcome of the who gets what/when/where question. After having recognised a tactic, I tried to see to what end they were deployed and what kind of power was used by the deployment. As tactics “are enabled by the exploitation of existing power asymmetries within a weak international institutional context”, I also tried to look at such existing power asymmetries (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.435).

3.2.5 *Challenges and remarks*

While conducting the interviews as well as in the stage of transcribing, I came to realise a few things that I feel are important to point out. First, it appeared a challenge to focus on water, agriculture and food security when talking about the rule of IS. For our interviewees poor water management and insufficient water availability is not new, but the way IS treats woman for example is new. One of our interviewees told us about a short return to Manbij four months after IS had taken over, she recalled “I saw everybody silent in the house and people from Tunis, Saudi Arabia, French, foreigners, controlling the city” (7). Apparently those two observations were most remarkable for her, not the amount of water running from the tap or the prices of bread. Besides it is a matter of whom to talk to. A politician will point out other things regarding IS’ (water) management and power, than a civil engineer or a women’s right activist. We did not speak with many water experts with long

and in-depth experience in the water field. Our 'water experts' were revolutionists⁵ who had been concerned with providing services (including water) since mid-2012, a farmer and a civil engineer. As I had limited time for my interviews, I did not have the opportunity to go back and forth, to draw up the balance and adjust interview questions and/or choice for interviewees. As the snowball method was used to get in touch with (aspirant) interviewees, being in the field longer would have helped to find more interviewees with relevant experience. Yet, I think I could partly have anticipated on this before by 1) trying harder to find farmers and/or people working in the water sector (engineers, hydraulics, perhaps someone from the agricultural bank) and ascertain their profession/experience before deciding to interview them; and 2) marking out the definition of water better, increase my knowledge on water systems and ask more specific questions. I believe this would have given me more complex but also more thorough data for analysis.

Second, our interviews were mostly focused on the city Manbij. Although some of our interviewees have family on the countryside of Manbij or are originally from a neighbouring village themselves, it might be good for the reader to take these demographic limitations into consideration.

Third and last, our interviewees appeared not convinced that IS has an excogitated plan to build a state and provide citizens with services. Several interviewees expressed a feeling that IS 'does not care' (2; 3; 6; 7). Despite that they had left when IS came to town, I am sure their family members and friends who stayed behind would have told them stories that gave proof of state building. Surely, as will be explained in the next chapter, IS has in fact established a whole state apparatus in Manbij. I particularly came aware of the contradiction between what literature said and the interviewees told me after I had read the introduction of 'the Islamic Phoenix' by Loretta Napoleoni (2014, xvi), which says:

"Beneath the religious veneer and the terrorist tactics, however, lies a political and military machine fully engaged in nation-building... Residents of the enclaves that the Caliphate controls affirm that the arrival of IS fighters coincided with improvements in the day-to-day running of their villages. IS fighters fixed potholes, organized soup kitchens for those who had lost their homes, and secured round-the-clock-electricity. In so doing, IS exhibits some understanding that in the twenty-first century, new nations cannot be built by terror and violence alone. To succeed, they require popular consensus".

The possible meaning of this contradiction will be discussed in the analysis part of this research.

⁵ People who (used to) work for the Free Syrian Army as well as those working in the Local Councils were referred to as revolutionists, reflecting their active role in the opposition.

4 Syria, Islamic State and Manbij District

The Syrian war is a highly complex war, which goes far beyond the narrative of regime-versus-rebels (Abboud 2014). This chapter will very briefly introduce the Syrian civil war as well as the rise and establishment of the Islamic State. Finally, some background information on Manbij will be given, based on both interview data and literature.

4.1 Syria and the civil war

Syria, officially the Syrian Arab Republic, a country of 185 square kilometres, is situated in the Middle East in the region east of the Mediterranean Sea (the Levant) and lies between Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, Israel and Lebanon (UNDP n.d.). Early 2011 the Syrian population was 20.8 million. The population in 2016 is estimated to be between 15 and 16 million, considering a population increase of 2.45%, 250,000⁶ deaths as well as registered and not registered refugees who left Syria. Syria's economy is mainly based on agriculture, oil and gas, phosphate mining and light industry. In 2010 one-fifth of Syria's national output was accounted by agriculture (Butter 2016). The country makes up a demographic mosaic of religious and ethnic groups and is ruled by an elite group surrounding president Bashar al-Assad, who himself is Alawite (a religious minority) (Heritage for Peace n.d.). Assad succeeded his father Hafez al-Assad after his death in 2000. The Baath party of the Assad's was founded in 1947 and particularly army officers had a leading role in its establishment. Hafez al-Assad was among them and in 1970 he seized power in a coup. During the nearly 50 years of ruling, the party with its early slogan 'unity, freedom, socialism', evolved into a "vast organisation that has infiltrated every aspect of public life" (BBC News 2012). This lack of freedom was one of the motivations of large-scale protests in Syria, starting in March 2011. As De Châtel (2014a, p.1) writes:

"As in other Arab countries, the uprising in Syria was triggered by a series of social, economic and political factors, including, in this case, growing poverty caused by rapid economic liberalization and the cancellation of state subsidies after 2005, a growing rural-urban divide, widespread corruption, rising unemployment, the effects of a severe drought between 2006 and 2010 and a lack of political freedom".

The droughts especially hit the North East of the country and were not (efficiently) tackled by the government, "feeding a discontent that had long been simmering in rural areas" (de Châtel 2014a). The beginning of the uprisings is generally marked on March 6 and the first mass demonstration took place on March 18 (Syria Deeply n.d.). Protests were met with violent crackdown but nevertheless continued. Opposition groups formed and also criminal brigades emerged (Syria Deeply n.d.). By June 2012 "the philosophy of jihad⁷ took hold

⁶ The UN stopped counting deaths mid-2014 at 250,000 as it could not get hold on reliable data. A new study of the Syrian Center for Policy Research estimated the number of deaths early 2016 at 470,000 people (Boghani 2016).

⁷ Jihad is the Arabic for 'striving'. Jihad has two components; the inner, spiritual struggle to overcome for example evil inclination (great jihad), and the armed defence of Islam (small jihad). In radical Islam jihad is used to legitimise violent confrontations and assaults against oppressors and to spread of (an interpretation of) Islam (Napoleoni 2014).

among many rebels” (Syria Deeply n.d.). In March 2013, jihadist rebel groups had grown in influence and continued growing as moderate rebel forces lagged behind in access to weapons and resources. In the five years of war, both rebel groups and the regime have been charged with human rights violations (Syria Deeply n.d.). The central government has continued to operate from Damascus, but its command does not reach more than half of the national territory (Butter 2016).

4.2 The Rise of the Islamic State

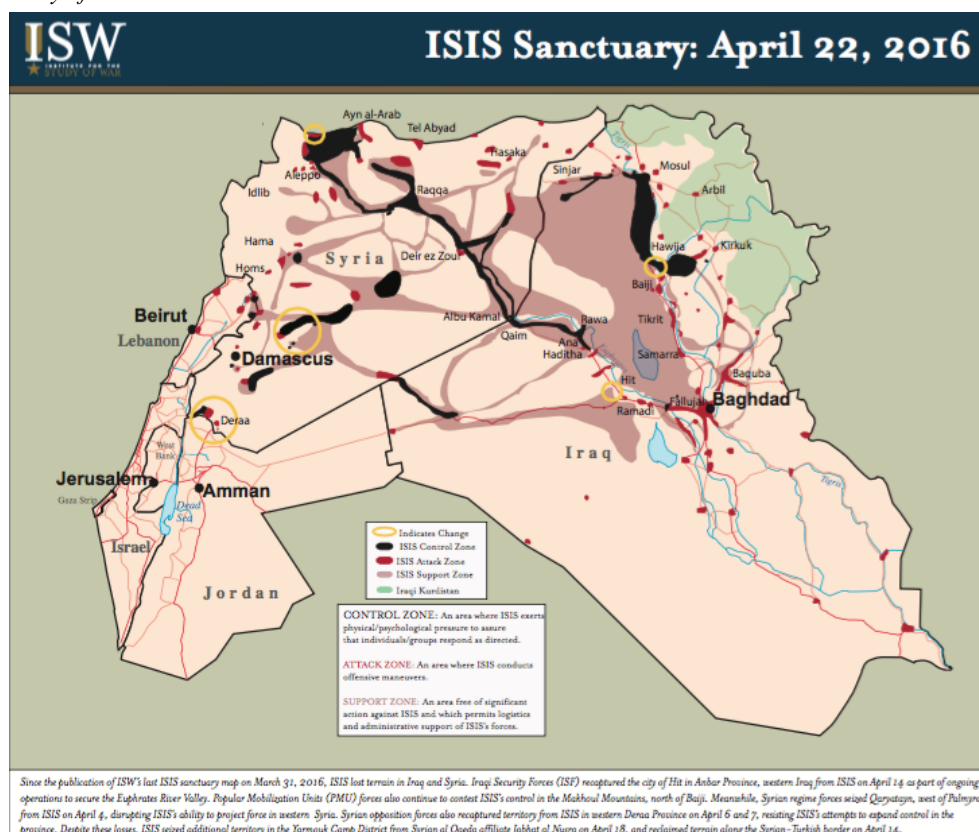
The Islamic State, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), has existed in various forms since the early 1990s. The group began with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian inspired by Salafism⁸ and jihad who had set up a training camp for jihadists in Afghanistan. When the Taliban fell, al-Zarqawi fled to Iraq (Ghosh 2014). After the overthrow of the Iraqi regime in 2003 and the establishment of a governing council consisting of mainly Shia Muslims (Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime was dominated by Sunni Muslims), a period of sectarian fighting started, attracting several jihadi groups. Also al-Zarqawi’s ‘Group of Monotheism and Jihad’ which he had established in 2003 joined (Rayburn 2014). The group’s suicide bombing campaigns across Iraq gave al-Zarqawi endorsement, and in 2004 he joined his group to al-Qaeda, renaming it Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In contrast to the majority of Iraqi Salafi insurgents, Zarqawi did not consider himself to be fighting a nationalist campaign to liberate Iraq; instead he saw his fight as a global war to re-establish the universal caliphate⁹. In 2006 al-Zarqawi was killed by U.S. bombing. After two more leaders, the current leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi took over in 2010 (Napoleoni 2014; Rayburn 2014; Cockburn 2015). Little is known with certainty about al-Baghdadi, who is described as enigmatic and holds a PhD in Koranic studies from a university in Baghdad (Osborne 2016; McCants 2016). When the Syrian war started al-Baghdadi saw a chance to take advantage, by setting up Jabhat al-Nusra (JAN) as the al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. “He split from it in 2013, but remained in control of a great swath of territory in northern Syria and Iraq” (Cockburn 2015, p.45). Al-Qaeda in Iraq was renamed Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), fighting for its own campaign next to JAN. In February 2014, based on the extreme violence used against fellow Muslims in particular, al-Qaeda’s general command disavowed IS (Caris & Reynolds 2014). In May 2014, ISIS seized Iraq’s second city Mosul. The momentous event led al-Baghdadi to call himself ‘caliph’ and rename the group ‘the Islamic State’ (Ghosh 2014; Lister 2014). Within a year time, IS had been able to take and maintain control over large strategic areas in Syria. Cockburn (2015, p.85) wrote that in Syria local people welcomed the jihadi’s as they were expected to bring back law and order after “the looting and banditry of the Western-backed Free Syrian Army”, but in the interviews I conducted the opposite was suggested¹⁰. Perhaps because in Manbij appeared to have been managed quite well before the arrival of IS, as will be shown further on in this chapter. After the victories in summer 2014, the total area under IS control covered the estimated equivalent of the size of Belgium or Jordan, depending on what one considers ‘control’ (Gilsinan 2014). Map 1 shows which areas were in the hands of IS on April 22 this year. However, the success of IS in Syria is partly attributed to the “absence of other capable actors” (Caris & Reynolds 2014, p.25). At time of this writing, IS has faced several setbacks. The group did not launch any major offensives since May 2015 and lost 40 percent of its land in Iraq and 10 percent of its land in Syria (Glenn 2016).

⁸ Napoleoni (2014, p.123) describes Salafism as “a sect of Islam that espouses strict, literal adherence to the tenets of Islam”. It originated in the 19th century as an intellectual movement in response to the European influence in the region. The European modernism was admired and it inspired the Salafis to seek to reconcile Islam with modernism, without the European influence. As this can be seen as a fight, Salafism is often associated with jihad (see footnote 7) (Napoleoni 2014; Stanley 2005).

⁹ The caliphate is the “dominion or rule of the Caliph”, who is the civil and religious ruler of a Muslim state and protector of the faith and regarded as the successor of the prophet Mohammed (Napoleoni 2014, p.116). Caliph was also the honorary title that Ottoman sultans appropriated themselves as they ruled and guarded over important areas in Islamic faith (Napoleoni 2014).

¹⁰ Besides the two interviewees who had been active in a Local Council, one of them who had also been fighting with the FSA, also other interviewees expressed support for the FSA. At least three interviewees explicitly expressed their support for the FSA (5; 7; 8). Raghda called the FSA “the greatest army in the world”.

Map 1. Areas in Syria and Iraq under the control of IS as of April 2016. Source: Institute for the Study of War

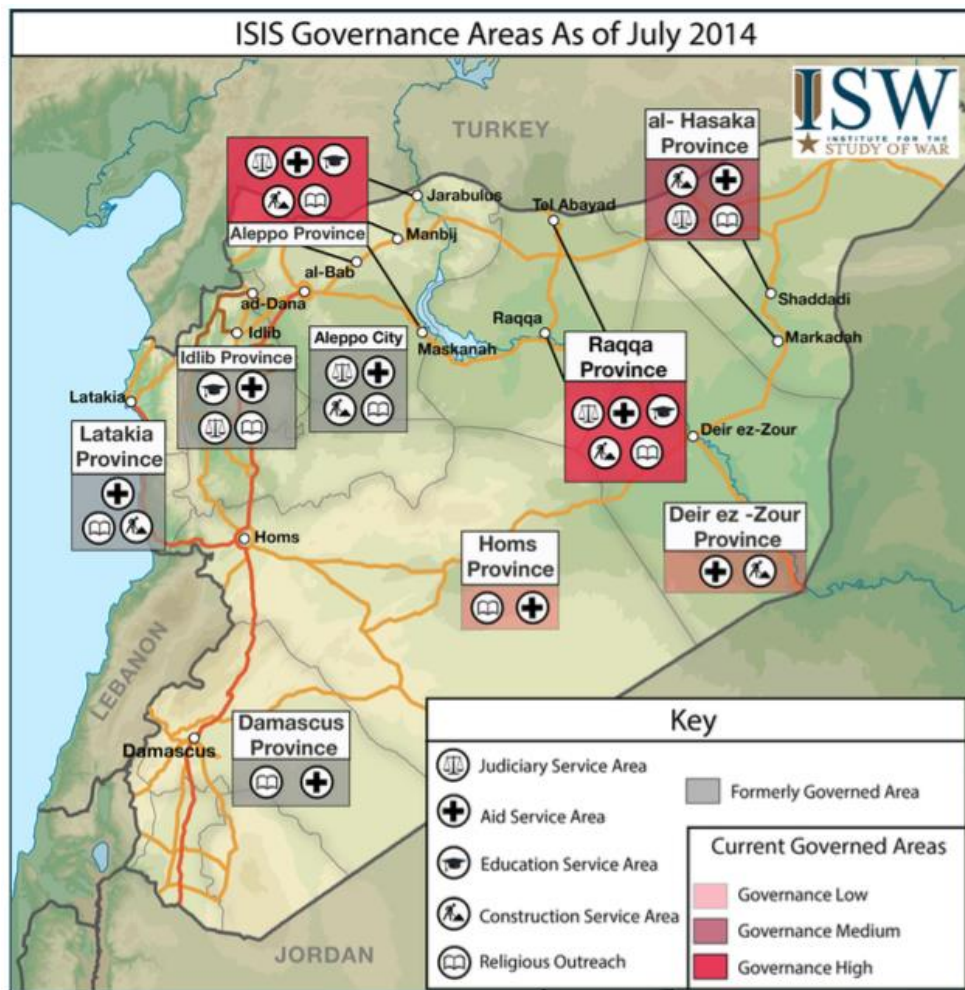


4.3 Islamic State's governance and water strategy

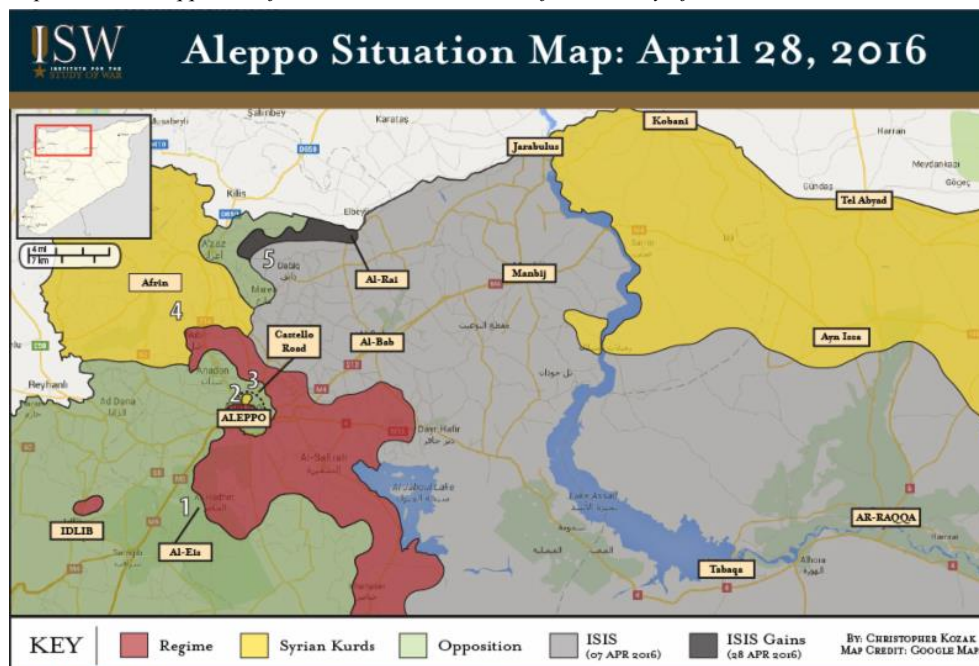
According to Caris and Reynolds, the aim of IS to establish a caliphate in a controlled territory can be realised by “first establishing control of terrain through military conquest and then reinforcing this control through governance” (Caris & Reynolds 2014, p.4). Their report shows that IS is capable of governing both rural and urban areas in Syria, including Manbij. The governance can be divided into administrative and service-oriented offices. The first are responsible for religious outreach and enforcement, courts and punishments, educational programming and public relations. The service-oriented offices are responsible for water and electricity systems, humanitarian aid and bakeries. Map 2 shows the services provided by IS in different parts of Syria as of summer 2014 (Caris & Reynolds 2014). The areas in IS' control include several water infrastructures and systems such as dams, pumping stations and sewage systems. King (2015, p.25) found that the seizure and control of such systems are part of a greater strategy, explaining that “territorial expansion is the primary goal and the water weapon is an affective means for expanding control of territory”. He concluded this after conducting extensive research of water weaponisation in Syria and Iraq between August 2012 and July 2015. Map 1 also reveals the (success of) this strategy; the swaths of IS control exactly follow the Euphrates River streaming through Syria and Iraq, as well as parts of the Tigris River in Iraq. Water weaponisation is deployed for several ends, including the aim to consolidate control, to use water to generate income, to weaken the enemy by cutting of water or creating floods, and to establish credibility as governing authority. IS has used water weaponisation for all those ends. Moreover, the systematic and persistent use of water as weapon by IS – King counted 44 incidents over five years of war and conflict in Syria and Iraq, of which 21 were conducted by IS – has been unprecedented in history of modern conflict (King 2015). In the period November 2012 till January 2016, IS has had control over eight dams, including for example Syria's largest dam responsible for water supply to about 5 million people (Tabqa dam) (von Lossow 2016). Also Tishrin Dam, east of Aleppo's district Manbij, was until recently in the hands of IS but on December 26 2015, the dam came in hands of the U.S.-backed and

mainly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) (von Lossow 2016; Lund 2015). This loss for IS is reflected in map 3, which shows who is ruling where in North West Syria late April this year. The map also shows that the area of this study, Manbij District, is still under control of IS. The area was seized by the group in January 2014. According to Turkmani, the seizure of Manbij is a good example of the way that IS “exploits existing divisions and economic needs. It shows the way ISIL prioritised the take over of strategic resources important for people’s lives, mainly fuel, bread, water and electricity” (Turkmani 2015, p.21).

Map 2. Islamic State governance areas as of July 2014. Source: Caris & Reynolds 2014



Map 3. Areas of control in northwest Syria as of late April 2016, Aleppo province left of the Euphrates, al-Raqa east of the river. Source: Institute for the Study of War



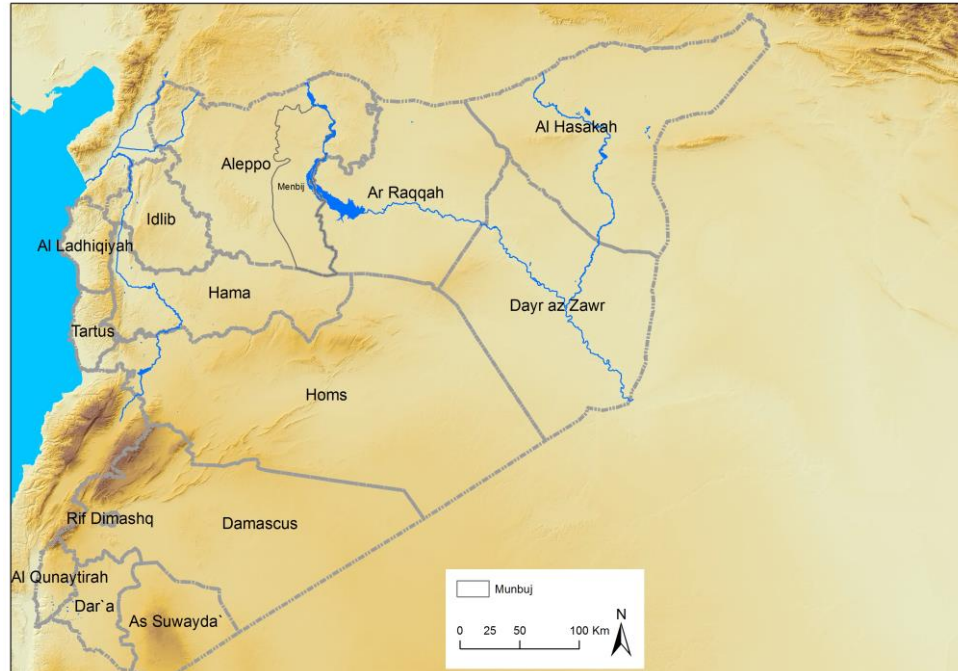
4.4 Manbij

Manbij (map 4) is described as an agricultural economy with a lot of trade and commerce (2; 5). The name Manbij derives from *Manba*, spring, referring to the many springs Manbij used to have, already in the Roman time (4). With 60-70% of its inhabitants working in the sector, agriculture forms the main source of income in the district and makes the region self-sufficient (1; 3; 4; 7; 8). Agriculture products include wheat, barley, sesame, olives, cotton, vegetables and legumes (1; 3; 4; 8). As cotton requires frequent irrigation its fields are situated close to the Euphrates River, but also wheat and legumes are irrigated with water from the Euphrates. The other agricultural products are rain-fed irrigated (4; 7; 8). Agricultural products from Manbij used to be bought by the state-owned Agricultural Bank, for what is said to be a low price (3; 4). Harvest used to be sold in Manbij city, as well as the cities Al-Bab, Aleppo and Raqa. Cotton is not manufactured in Manbij and was therefore brought to Aleppo or exported. Olive oil and nuts were also to a great extent exported (1; 3). The Agricultural Bank also used to have an office responsible for water management. This is for example where people had to ask permission to drill wells (4). Beside the agriculture, Manbij is known for its mills, Seed Company as well as its Cows Company, responsible for the production of meat and dairy foods (5; 3). Drinking water for Manbij is pumped and purified by two stations, al-Babiri and al-Sabkha, before it is pumped to the city and villages (1; 8). Al-Babiri also provides water for Aleppo and Jarabulus (3). Management of the stations is under governmental control and arranged centrally (3). For electricity the stations rely on hydropower from the Tishrin dam (7).

The socio-economic situation described here changed with the start of the war. Mid-2012 government forces and institutions withdrew and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) took control over the area. With the approval and support of the FSA, Local Committees who had led the peaceful protests against the Assad regime before the army's withdrawal, formed a Revolutionary Council (RC). The council governed Manbij till IS took over (Ali 2015). This governance and "revive of civil society life" (Turkmani 2015, p. 21), is considered quite unique and exemplary (e.g. by Ali 2015 and Abboud 2014). Also my interviewees appeared positive about this opposition period. Under the Assad-regime, households would only get one or two hours a week tap water (6; 1). Digging wells required permission and it was generally not allowed for individuals (however, with bribes permissions could be obtained or the government would look away when a well was drilled without permission) (7). After the withdrawal of the regime, the FSA allowed citizens to drill their own wells, reducing their dependence on (unreliable) tap water and the water

tanks that drives from the Euphrates River to the people once or twice a week to sell water (1; 4; 5; 7). It is said 90% of the people rely on wells now for their living (1). Furthermore, the FSA changed the regime's electricity system. Under the regime electricity was delivered according to the principle of *taqnin*, or rationing. This meant that some areas would receive more electricity than others. The areas receiving more were those that supported the Assad regime or with a mostly Alawite population (7). In Manbij it happened that electricity was cut for fourteen hours a day (1). The FSA replaced the system with a system called *system 3x3*. This meant that households would get electricity for 3 hours, followed by 3 hours without and again followed with three hours provision (7). Also, it was said that the FSA and Local Councils arranged compost and seeds for farmers, and equipment like a water filter for the main pumping station as those had become hard to obtain (1). The RC had ordered government employees to continue their work under the local councils, to avoid brain drain (Ali 2015). But not all government employees stayed and as a consequence the RC was sometimes facing challenges to efficiently run flourmills as well as the infrastructures and systems responsible for water and electricity (Ali 2015). Besides the local councils lacked sustainable financing and faced competition from other groups for the loyalty of the population (Abboud 2014). Nevertheless, the civil administration, left to ordinary people, enjoyed a high degree of legitimacy which "derives from their embeddedness in Syrian society and their sustained role in the revolution" (Abboud 2014). In contrast, foreign fighters are viewed by many as disconnected from Syrian realities on the ground (Abboud 2014). This distrust towards foreign fighters was also seen when IS took over. Manbij city came in hands of IS on January 21, 2014 and has remained in control over the city and district up until today (1; 3; 8; 7). The city even became a very important 'harbour' city for IS, as many of its foreign fighters first arrived here (since many of them are British, the city even became known as 'Little London') (Ensor & Samaan 2016).

Map 4. Map of Syria with Manbij (Menbij/Munbuj) district situated in Aleppo Province, with on its eastern borders a part of the Euphrates River. Source: GeoExpertise 2016



5 Analysis: Water distribution under Islamic State

The analysis in this chapter is aimed at answering the question *how and to whom did the Islamic State distribute water in Manbij?* The data for this analysis comes from interviews conducted in Şanlıurfa, Turkey early April, as explained in chapter 3. The chapter will close with a summary of the analysis, highlighting the main findings.

5.1 The analysis

This analysis focuses on the period the Islamic State controlled Manbij District, from January 2014 till the time of the interviews, April 2016. The analysis is classified in six subjects: taking over, socio-economic consequences, rule (governance), resource management, IS' narrative, and support. Although the analytical interpretations are sometimes similar, I consider this the most accessible way to present outcomes.

5.1.1 Taking over

Early 2014 IS made a march from their headquarter Raqqa to Manbij. On their way they won the Tishrin dam from the FSA, on January 19 after a heavy battle of ten days (1)¹¹. The FSA eventually withdrew as they didn't want the number of (civilian) victims to become higher and feared IS would attack the dam itself (1), although Qusayr did not think this would happen as the dam is too important for IS. Seizing the dam enabled IS to cross the Euphrates south east of Manbij city. The next thing they took were the flower mills that are situated on a strategic higher hill, from where they targeted the city with snipers (1). Also from other places the city was targeted with artillery, and the city was besieged¹² for ten days (3). On 21 January 2014, IS took over the city, interviewees 1, 3, 8, 7 remembered without doubt, following the withdrawal of the FSA¹³. Just as in the battle of the dam, the FSA left for the security of the civilians as they realised IS would not stop (1; 3; 5). They

¹¹ Although this source can be expected to know when the dam was seized by IS as he was working for the Free Syrian Army, other accounts say the dam was already seized by IS in November 2012 (King 2015; von Lossow 2016; Strategic Foresight Group 2014). King's research in particular seems very reliable but it is significant that this or other interviewees did not mention that the dam, only 30 km from Manbij, was seized already 1,5 year before the group seized control over Manbij.

¹² When I asked how IS took over Manbij, interviewees themselves did not refer to a siege or used the word siege. Only when I asked they acknowledged. This might mean the interviewees did not perceive this ten-day period as a siege.

¹³ According to other sources the FSA had left to the front already in 2013, allowing for different criminal brigades to bring chaos in the city. To bring back peace, Jabhat Al-Nusra was asked to come to the town and they are said to have changed allegiance to the Islamic State after their arrival in Manbij. The Islamic State then controlled the city from mid-2013 until citizens managed to expel the group in January 2014 after which IS sieged the town and returned definitively on (discussed) 21 or 23 January 2014 (Turkmani 2015; Ali 2015). All seven interviewees whom I had asked about this, confirmed the story above, not the report in this footnote. The date the Islamic State came to Manbij for the first time was by four interviewees undoubtedly noted as January 21, 2014, not 2013.

feared that IS would attack civilians like they had done in Deir ez-Zor province (1). Also JAN was said to leave at the time IS approached or entered the city (6). JAN was said to have been present in Manbij only a very little time and some JAN-fighters are believed to have changed allegiance to IS after their conquest of Manbij (3).

Manbij was a strategic choice for IS as the Euphrates streams by its border and provides the region with water and electricity (Tishrin Dam) (1; 2; 3). Also; the location of Manbij city lies strategically between Raqqa and Aleppo and close to the Turkish border (1; 2; 3). The border is advantageous as guns are smuggled from Turkey (5). The Qere Qozaq bridge (north east of the city Manbij) can be used to transfer petrol to areas under IS control west of the Euphrates (3). Also the Tishrin dam can be used as a bridge (2).

Besides the mills and the wheat factory, the company for dairy foods and meat production (Sharika al-Abarar) was taken over (3). This meant that meat or dairy products were not (directly) available for the citizens anymore, as well as the legumes and wheat as they were processed in the mills (3).

Analysis

For the seizure of Manbij and the Tishrin Dam, military force is used as main tactic, drawing upon material power. However, it can also be argued that in fact relatively little violence was used in Manbij. As written before, tactics “are enabled by the exploitation of existing power asymmetries within a weak international institutional context” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.435). The violent reputation that frightened the defenders of Manbij can be seen as such an existing power asymmetry¹⁴. Once the inequality is there, it does not require much effort to exploit it. Hence it can be seen as structural power, the exploitative potential ingrained in the structure of the beholder. A tactic drawing upon such power is coercion-pressure, which is mainly about threatening. I reason the (conscious or unconscious) exploitation of the violent reputation of IS can also be seen as coercion-pressure. Although IS used material power both in Manbij and elsewhere, the success of IS in seizing Manbij can be explained by the withdrawal of the FSA, who *feared* IS would use more violence, thus relying upon a reputation that IS obtained before and now turned out beneficial for them. Further below the reputation will be analysed in relation to ideational power instead of structural power.

5.1.2 Socio-economic changes

With IS many challenges came in (3; 5). ‘The normal people’ are most affected, as schools, universities and hospitals were closed, after IS said the employees were working for the regime (5; 7). Normal life ceased to exist (5; 7). Step by step rules were implemented. Women for example were first ordered to cover themselves, then they were ordered not to go out without a male guide (6). This put a lot of pressure on women, especially widows (8). Also, any woman who wants to leave Manbij needs permission, and if she would stay away longer than ten days her belongings would be confiscated (8; 7). Furthermore, women are not allowed to work (3; 7; 8). Common jobs women practice are nursing, teaching and working in agriculture (7). In agriculture, women do most of the work (especially harvesting) while men are responsible for the machinery and physically heavier work (1; 2; 3; 6). In addition, women go to the market and bring their children to school (3). When women are given permission to work, they have to be fully covered which makes their work very hard, if not impossible (1; 4; 7). One woman said: “for women, her house became like a jail” (5). She recalled the violence used against her daughter who lives under IS in Raqqa; her daughter was beaten up in the street and imprisoned for going out without a man (5). Other rules prescribed by IS include the prohibition of sunglasses, teeth brushing, high heels, jeans for women and make up (7). This meant that several businesses (e.g. perfumeries and hairdressers) had to close and the retailers had to find other sources of income (2; 3). Meanwhile prices increased. One woman thinks that IS understood that the production of bread would reduce under their control and therefore increased the prices, in an attempt to sustain and regulate the sale of bread (5). In the first week of IS’ control, no

¹⁴ Note that while IS owes its reputation to the violence used before, existing power asymmetries include more than a group’s reputation. Although it is not deliberated in this study, the existing balance is also defined by for example financial resources, international support, and institutional strength (Zeitoun & Warner 2006).

one was allowed to work in the bakeries, leading to an extreme shortage of bread (7)¹⁵. After this week, the price of bread got higher (1). The price of a package of bread was said to have increased from 20 SYP (0,09 USD) to the tenfold of 200 or even twentyfold of 400 SYP (0,90 or 1.80 USD) (3; 6; 7). In response, people started to make bread at home (3; 7). The price increase was not limited to bread. Everything in Manbij became more expensive and at the same time, citizens are submitted to several new taxes. Most people in Manbij now live under the poverty level and many are too poor to pay the taxes (5; 7; 8)¹⁶.

Everyone who has a chance leaves, Dima believes. Even though it means that IS will take all properties that are left behind (6; 7). Also, every individual who leaves Manbij needs to pay 1000 USD for a smuggler (1; 3; 6). Initially people did not want to leave, as their belongings would go to IS and as they knew being a refugee is not easy either, but “they can’t handle to live under IS anymore” (6).

Analysis

Looking at the socio-economic consequences of IS’ rule in Manbij, it appears that the whole society is transformed, including the norms. The change of behaviour (women are *imposed* to stay inside the house) might lead to a change of norms (it is *legitimised* women stay inside the house). From this interview data it appears that violence is needed first to force certain behaviour upon society (think of the example from the mother from Raqqa) but to legitimise an idea about behaviour is part of the process of *knowledge construction* in which the hegemon is trying to obtain support for their favourable discourse, and *sanctioning a discourse*, defined as “a normative delimitation separating the types of discourse perceived to be politically acceptable from those that are deemed politically and unacceptable at a specific point in time” (Feitelson 1999 in Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.448). Interpreting the interview data it seems that IS has been very successful in creating a state of containment through the utilisation of ideational power. However, it appears that the sanctioned discourse and constructed knowledge are not centred on *the norms itself*, but *the consequences of not complying*. In other words, while the interviewees did *not* become to believe that for example women should only go out in company of a male guide, they *did* become to believe that not going out with a male guide would lead to punishment. So, while it seems that IS wants to obtain compliance by legitimising and regenerating support for their ideology, they in fact obtain compliance by spreading the fear that non-compliance leads to extreme consequences. While ideology is not sincerely believed, the idea that violence will be used in case of non-compliance is, so only part of the message is believed. As final illustration: it is believed that adultery *will* be punished with lapidation, not that it is *right* and *legitimate* to punish unfaithfulness with lapidation. This shows that IS has to a certain extent been successful in exploiting ideational power, despite the scepticism about their legitimisation (see below).

Still, the interviews reflect that the power of IS is not absolute; there are still ‘coping mechanisms’ or ways of ‘resistance’ available for citizens as appears from the observation that people started to bake bread at home in response to the increased prices. Apparently, IS was not able to (fully) control the distribution of wheat or levy taxes on it, constraining people to bake bread at home as well.

The financial effects of IS’ governance are central in the accounts of the interviewees. While it appears violence or the threat of violence is used to levy taxes (material, ideational, and structural power), also the levy of taxes itself can be seen as a tactic generating resources to implement other strategies. As literature has shown the income of IS is used for weapons and as a ‘buy-in’ in society by offering services and humanitarian aid (e.g. Napoleoni 2014). My interviewees only mentioned that IS loyalists are offered high salaries (see also below under ‘support’). The taxes appear essential for IS and it seems a major occupation to levy them, for example by preventing people from leaving, using the threat that what is left behind will be confiscated (coercion-pressure).

¹⁵ This was perhaps during the ‘siege’ in which IS took over the flour mills and from there targeted the city.

¹⁶ Today over 85% of the Syrians in the country are living in poverty, with almost 7 in 10 living in extreme poverty unable to afford essentials like water and food. While in 2011 14.9% of the population was jobless, by the end of 2015 it had increased to 52.9% (Boghani 2016).

5.1.3 Rule (governance)

Taxes are levied on everything, including agricultural products (1). Shop owners have to comply with IS otherwise their shops are taken by IS or they have to pay (more) taxes. Also, IS positions themselves as arbitrators when families sell each other a piece of land for example, demanding 25% of the sum, which they are actually not allowed to do (7). Furthermore, people need to go to IS to get their salaries (1). However, in Manbij civil servants still got salaries from the regime but kept this secret for IS (7).

IS is known for their violence and spreading of fear (1; 7). They are known for torturing and imprisonment (1). Under IS people have been imprisoned or publicly killed (3). Tariq referred to the secret police of IS and that people were taken and never heard of again. Raghda pointed out that IS can charge one of anything and “you have no way to defend yourself”. Furthermore, women have been sentenced with lashes or lapidation, and have been beaten in the streets for not dressing well. (3) In relation to IS’ water management (discussed below), it was said that IS “did not come to do anything for the people” (7). IS was not considered to be concerned with state building. Instead they are perceived as “criminals” who are “just here to break things and control people”, too occupied with “punishment and covering women” to be concerned about water management (3; 7; 1). Also other interviewees felt IS does not care for anything, like water, education, the environment and the physical and mental health of the people (1; 2; 6).

Nadia noted that IS does not have to threaten or do anything specific, as people already know who they are. “The power of IS is that they just make people scared”, Nadia said. Another woman said: “IS just cuts heads” (5). Also people started to mistrust each other, afraid of spies. This evolved from the beginning period of IS in Manbij, when new loyalists of IS were deployed as spies (7). IS does not allow Internet in Manbij as they don’t want people to talk with the outside world (3).

Yet, IS wants the population to stay, Adam supposes, and he believes citizens are offered water, salaries, and bread. According to Nidal, IS tries to keep people in Manbij so they can function as a human shield (3). But perhaps IS also needs citizens to profit from the taxes they pay. IS is said to make a lot of money now in Manbij (5).

Analysis

From this information the same conclusions can be drawn as above, namely that IS is drawing upon their violent reputation to extort compliance and that this reputation can be seen as exploitation of existing power asymmetries as well as the exploitation of ideational power. The accounts of interviewees given here one more time stress the strength of the violent discourse of IS, for example reflected in the language use. Interviewees perceive IS as a group that “just cuts heads” and “just makes people scared”. The word *just* implies a disbelief that IS has any other way to extort obedience. It reflects again that IS appears to have effectively implanted their idea that resistance or disobedience will be suppressed by violence. The difference between this discourse that is believed and accepted as reality and the discourse legitimising IS’ ideology which is perceived with scepticism, I think is the *process of construction*. Both narratives are subject of knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse. But it appears that the process of securing support for IS’ definition of reality and prevailing this definition has been different for each narrative. The narrative that violence will be used in certain situations, results from violence used in the past and from public executions, which are exploited in the form of (active/passive uttered) threats. The legitimising and ideological narrative is mainly spread by speech acts during public performances. Both processes are further discussed under ‘IS’ narrative’.

Besides the utterance of threats, which can be seen as coercion-pressure tactic, IS also utilised coercion-pressure by installing a secret police apparatus to maintain absolute control and undermine anyone who tries to weaken IS.

Finally, another sign of ‘resistance’ besides baking bread (analysis of 5.1.2) can be found here, namely the fact that civil servants have hidden the fact that they still received salaries from the regime. This is not only another example of “human ingenuity and adaptive capabilities” but it also pictures how IS is perceived (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.455). Why was it kept hidden for IS that regime salaries were still received? Perhaps because IS has killed civil servants before, reflecting once again how strong the belief is that these civil servants *will* be killed too if IS finds out that they have continued working for the regime.

5.1.4 Resource management

IS has a special committee for water services, but according to the interviewees they don't have the knowledge or expertise to manage water (1; 2; 7; 8). Regarding the Tishrin Dam, most employees left when IS came, and to keep employees in the Tishrin dam, IS is paying high salaries (1; 3; 8). One interviewee said IS does not hire academic people but instead anyone can be hired as 'expert' (1). Nidal believed IS does not have an organisation or program for water management. Taps do not always provide enough water (7). Only the residences of IS loyalists are (efficiently) provided with (running) water and electricity (7). However, as many people had already drilled wells in the time of the FSA (and some people under the regime), the dependence on tap water had decreased (1). Today, each neighbourhood, each four houses or even each house has its own well (1; 2; 3; 7). One woman could tell us that under IS families get three days a week water, which is used as drinking water, to prepare food and for cleaning (6). When the tap water stops and reserves are finished, people buy water again (2). Water is brought from the Euphrates, and like in the regime time driven around and sold (6). If individuals or businesses want to sell water, IS supervises it (7). In addition each family pays a fixed amount for water, even if they don't receive it (3). Raghda noted that: "IS is not aiming to make people thirsty but they use the resources for their own benefits". As an example she mentioned that IS is selling water and thus making money out of it (5). The same goes for electricity and meat (5). Also Nidal said making money is the greatest interest of IS (3). One interviewee told that IS warns inhabitants not to waste water (8).

As the price of petrol increased drastically under IS, (private) pumping systems and machinery can often not be used anymore (2; 4; 5). Under IS, the costs of a gallon (in Syria 20 litre) is said to be 90-105 USD (5; 6). The costs of using pumping systems or other machinery would not outweigh the benefits (5; 6). This contributed to many farmers' decision to stop farming for the market (5). Over the last five years, agriculture production in Manbij has reduced drastically (2; 3; 4; 7). Farmers have experienced difficulties in obtaining compost and seeds (6). Working on the land has become dangerous as farmers can be hit by bombs (2; 3). Also, farmers risk that their harvest will be destroyed as a casualty of conflict between individuals or (small) groups, or that no one will buy their harvest (2; 7; 3). The Agriculture Bank has stopped buying farmers' products and until IS, only some businessmen still managed to sell a farmer's harvest on the black market (7; 3; 2). If harvest was sold, it was sold for the old, cheap, price, which did not generate enough income to cover the increased costs of agriculture (3). Finally, the reduction of agriculture can be explained by the number of farmers that have left (1; 2; 3; 4; 7).

Farmers who still produced enough to sell part of it saw their products being sent to Raqqa; no longer did harvest go to Aleppo or other areas not under IS control (8). How the relation between IS and farmers is did not become clear (except for taxes being levied). Nadia and Nidal assume there is no relation or cooperation or what so ever as farmers stopped producing for the market (7).

The electricity providing dam Tishrin has (temporarily) stopped working during IS rule, but despite IS kept al-Babiri running by bringing it fuel (8). According to Nadia nothing has happened when IS controlled the dam. But Dima remembered that after IS had seized control, an area was flooded – probably accidentally as employees of the dam had left. In responds, one of the employees came (or was forced to come) back and could prevent worse. Or perhaps, as Dima did know exactly what happened, IS talked with other groups on how to fix it. But she was sure many villages were affected. Nidal also knew about those events and said it took place four months before our interview in April (so late 2015) after one of the employees left (3)¹⁷. He also said several villages and agricultural areas were affected but due to a fast respond the flooding of more areas could be prevented.

Analysis

The interview data discussed here gives insights on the distributional issue of who gets what and who is left out. It appears that loyalists of IS have been unconditionally provided with (running) water and electricity whereas for non-loyalists constraints were imposed in order to obtain water and electricity, mainly in the form of financial restrictions. Accordingly, those who can pay are more likely to get. Besides answering who gets what

¹⁷ If this indeed took place in December 2015, it is likely that this error coincided or at least relates to the capture of the dam from IS by Kurdish forces, who are reported to have taken the dam December 2015 (Lund 2015; von Lossow 2016).

and who is left out, it shows that those who do not agree with the narrative of IS (the sanctioned discourse), are subjected to restrictions related to less water and electricity and higher costs.

Regarding electricity provision, citizens of regime-controlled areas might also be among those who get. This has raised questions; how is it possible that electricity produced by the Tishrin dam is transferred to Aleppo but does not reach (normal) households in Manbij? Nadia thinks there must be some sort of agreement between IS and the regime, which Nidal also believes. He said that IS does not have an interest in electricity if it does not benefit them. According to him, IS probably provides the wheat factory and hospital with electricity and sells the rest to the regime. Such agreements also exist on petrol and military equipment. Furthermore he noted: “the deals are political, it will take a long time before we are able to talk about this”. It is also said there is a deal between IS and the regime about a thermal station close to Aleppo in which it is agreed IS will not touch it (3).

Finally, in this analysis of resource management again financial resources play a major role. As one interviewee said, “IS is not aiming to make people thirsty but they use the resources for their own benefits” (5). Regardless of to which end IS wants to use water and other resources, they have to maintain control. The tactics used to do so were already mentioned before, namely creating fear, threatening and using violence, drawing upon their ideational and material power. However, it appears also bargaining power has been exploited here in relation to electricity provision. Interviewees suppose IS made an ‘agreement’ with the regime. Although nothing is known about such an agreement, I personally expect it to be a sort of “inducement for compliance with the hegemon’s preferred state of affairs” (the tactic of incentives). Who then the hegemon is, IS or the regime, I cannot judge solely based on the information gathered for this research.

5.1.5 IS’ narrative

IS uses religion to legitimise their message but for the people of Manbij, IS does not represent Islam, interviewees think (3; 5). Conformingly, Nidal said that after people had experienced IS for a while, they were convinced “it is not religion” (3). According to Tariq, IS makes statements like “we imply to rules of God, we are here to be good Muslims” and “we need to make a state in the way the prophet wants”. Tariq explained that people in general don’t believe this because their idea of ‘good Muslims’ is not compatible with the violence of IS. Nidal supposes IS needs to use violence in Manbij as their religious narrative is not convincing enough (3).

Besides a religious message, Nadia pointed out that the narrative of IS includes the vilification and slandering of the Free Syrian Army, and the glorification of themselves. However, also this did not appeal to most people, Nadia says, as people felt their lives were more secure under the FSA. Furthermore, the ideology of IS also includes the conviction that IS can use water the way they want, and that if water is needed, God will give it (2).

IS commonly holds meetings at the main square in Manbij, in which they speech and publicly assassinate people, giving a warning of what will happen in case of disobedience (1; 2; 7). Also mosques, gardens, markets and stations are used for meetings and spreading messages (by public performances, through microphones or by jeeps driving around with speakers) (1; 2; 5). Raghda once attended a meeting and described it as “lessons in Jihad”. She remembered the speeches sounded like “my son, you go to school, study, university, but what is next? Next is Jihad, everything except for jihad is meaningless. Education is without value. Jihad and fight is more important”. She also recalled that the jihadists had brought small gifts for the children. IS ‘brainwashes’ and ‘poisons’ people, she said, and pointed out that a new generation of children is trained by IS. Brainwashing was also mentioned, as well as ‘power of ideas’ (2; 5). Finally, the good media skills of IS were mentioned (5).

Analysis

The information described here reveals a bit of the process of knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse. The campaigns (“lessons in Jihad”, as they were referred to) and public assassinations can be seen as channels through which ideational power is exploited. The use of these ideational tactics is to obtain containment (by maintaining the violent reputation, threatening and spreading fear). While people are sceptical about the religious ideology, the threats that go with the public assassinations are taken very serious. It appears IS has been successful in implanting the idea that there *will* be constraints imposed upon

those who speak or think outside of IS' sanctioned ideological discourse and hence this belief has become (or *constructed*) a sanctioned discourse as well. However, it can also be argued that the process of knowledge construction is *not* followed by the tactic sanctioned discourse as interviewees said the narrative of IS is generally not believed. In other words, IS has only been partly successful by imposing a sanctioned discourse, as the part of the discourse that is successfully sanctioned is that on violence, not on the *legitimacy* of this violence. Hence, I think it is reasonable to see it as two different narratives that are both subjected to knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse as described above.

Constraints imposed upon those who do not align with IS that were mentioned in this chapter include imprisonment, increased taxes and limited accessibility to water and electricity. However, also financial and distributional constraints can be seen as sanctions.

Finally, it was said that IS thinks they can use water the way they want and that if more water is needed, God will provide. This is a common attitude in Islamic societies (De Châtel 2014), but at the same time no interviewee reveals anything that would prove IS is using its water resources carelessly. Instead one interviewee even said that IS warned people to use water with care. I reason that this reflects that IS actually knows very well what it is doing with water resources, although this might not be perceived at first glance.

5.1.6 Support

According to Nadia, "everyday people hate IS more". There is generally no support for IS in Manbij (1; 2; 4; 5; 7). Yet, interviewees realised that some people from Manbij joined IS (2; 3; 8). IS is said to attract people with money and jobs (3). Others said that people joined out of fear (2; 8). Only few people joined IS because they could relate to the ideology, interviewees said (3; 8). According to Qusayr and Nidal, these people are not educated. It is also mentioned that criminals joined IS. Nadia and Adam think that some of the people who joined IS might also be driven by negative experiences or ideas about the FSA. Raghda supposes that IS did attract some people who were already practicing Muslims before IS came. Furthermore it is stressed that IS is full of people from outside Syria (5). Tariq said that people see IS as a sickness, but people are happy to live in their own houses and not in refugee camps.

Four months after IS had come to Manbij, a demonstration was organised in the form of a strike in which the market and all shops stayed closed (1; 3; 7). In response, IS broke the locks of the shops and threatened that anyone who did not open his shop put himself in a very dangerous position (1). According to Nadia, demonstrators were arrested, and Nidal added that after the strike many young people were hung in the streets. Thus protests did not take place anymore, except for words written on the walls saying 'we don't want IS' (1; 3). The force of IS is too strong, Tariq concluded.

Analysis

When the hegemon already has full control over resources (water, electricity, financial), not much more power is needed to provide loyalists with higher salaries, better houses and continuous water and energy. This thus endorses the statement of Cascão and Zeitoun that "strengths and weaknesses in one dimension mutually reinforce or weaken the others" (Cascão & Zeitoun 2010, p.39). It can be said that due to the material power of IS the group increased its geographical power. Together those two categories increased IS' ideational power, which includes the group's potential to exploit their reputation, threaten and spread fear.

While I previously argued that IS has been successful in making people believe that speaking and thinking outside of the prevailed discourse will be punished, the fact that a strike was organised shows that this was perhaps not believed, or that the consequences were considered acceptable. The strike, a typical "weapon of the weak", and "tacit obstruction and boycotts of outcomes desired by the hegemon", was met with great violence (Scott 1995 in/and Warner & Zawahri 2012, p.219). This confirms one more time the violent image of IS. At the same time it implies that violence is used against those who did not align with IS' 'definition of reality'. Violence is thus used as a warning against those who wish to think or speak in a different way than IS, as well as a sanction for those who did. Hereby violence is not necessarily deployed; the violent image also works as a threat. Those two dimension of power are in conclusion the most prevailing in this analysis and the answer to the question how IS distributed water in Manbij.

5.2 Concluding remarks

The interpretations of subnational hydropolitics in Manbij under IS are summarised in table 3. This table shows that it is hard to separate power deployed to consolidate control over water resources from power deployed for other ends. Water and other facets are linked together and perhaps only a more in-depth and extensive study can disclose more on *hydro-hegemony*, for example by looking IS' institutional structures to implement their water resources plan.

As already noted in chapter 2, it is too limiting to examine the four dimensions of power separately; in reality they are interrelated and inseparable fields of power. The analysis in this chapter underlines this. Some observations can be discussed in the light of different kinds of power, like the idea that disobedience will be met with violent punishment. This is not only a threat (structural power) but also became a sincere belief (ideational power). A returning subject in the analysis is the violent reputation of IS, obtained by the use of military force and violence in the past, elsewhere, in public 'spectacles' and in arbitrary public occasions. Reputation, without being passively exploited by for example threatening, can be seen as part of structural power as it has become ingrained in the structure of IS, ready to be exploited without it requires much power. I.e. the reputation can be perceived as a threat without it requires 'new' actions by IS. However, as the perceived threat has become sincerely believed and functioned to create a situation of containment, reputation can also be discussed in the light of ideational power.

Also, in this case study it became particularly clear that power in one level increases power in another level. Zeitoun and Warner (2006, p.443) explained: "A hegemon's material power (technology, economic clout) undergirds its first-dimensional power to represent the world in a particular way, and find these representations accepted and reproduced by those not in power. The second and third dimensions of power are then more readily put to use." If one asks how IS increased their material power (e.g. manpower) it might turn out that here ideational power (the religious narrative and social media campaign) was indispensable. This also points out that the situation reflected in this chapter is in reality undoubtedly more complex than this study could reveal.

In this research interviewees had a strong disbelief that IS is actually running a service-providing state apparatus, as the literature suggests (e.g. Caris & Reynolds 2014; Turkmani 2015). I think such perceptions (in this case the hegemonised) can tell something about the perceived (here the hegemon). The example given here can be interpreted as a reflection of the strong material power of IS and frequent and extreme use of violence. Possibly, the perception of such negative and deconstructive acts cannot be united with something that is perceived as positive and constructive, like service provision. Besides, the disbelief might also be explained by the simple fact that IS seems so occupied with the use of violence, citizens hardly believe they have time left for state building (1; 6). Lastly, it seems to reflect a perception that IS is the embodiment of the *worst-case scenario*. This can also be interpreted from the following citation: "if we knew the revolution would bring us this [lack of water and electricity under IS] maybe we would not have asked for it, but we also need freedom" (6). Another issue of perceptions is the fact that interviewees had different perceptions on water availability and scarcity. Those who had been able to drill a well when the FSA was controlling Manbij for example, may perceive less limitations to water availability. As this also says something about IS' distributional politics (namely that they have not consolidated control over wells), it shows that it might be important to look deeper at perceptions and what they tell us.

In conclusion, it can be said that IS has mainly used ideational power to implement its decisions on water allocation, but that material power has been indispensable in order to successfully implement ideational tactics. Those tactics were mainly knowledge construction, sanctioned discourse and coercion-pressure in the form of threats, but also the reputation of IS can be seen as a tactic (although, when actively exploited reputation can be observed in the form of threats as well).

The result of this power use by IS' in order to allocate and distribute water in their favour, answers the question who gets what and who is left out. Based on the interview data it can be concluded that people who are loyal to IS receive water unconditionally, whereas non-loyalist citizens of Manbij face several constraints. Since the constraints particularly relate to finances (e.g. having no alternative than to buy water), those who do not have the financial means are 'left out'. Furthermore, people who assured access to a well before the

arrival of IS are a bit more 'advantaged' because they are in the position to obtain water from a source that IS has not been consolidating control over.

Table 3. Summary of Analysis of Subnational Hydropolitics in Manbij under IS. Colours indicate strength; the darker the more power. Note that the strength of structural power is mainly based upon the exploitation of IS' reputation, which also for a great part determines the strength of ideational power. Source: compiled by author.

Power	Tactics	Interpretations (and related strategy)	Theoretical notes
Geographical position	-	IS has settled along the Euphrates (see chapter 3)	Due to material power in particular
Material power Overall economic, political and military power and international and financial support	Military force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Battle at Tishrin, seizure of Tishrin Dam (resource capture) - Seizure of Manbij (resource capture) - Maintaining violent reputation and spreading fear by public 'spectacles' (containment) - Seizing control over water pumping systems and the sales of water (resource capture) 	Violence used in the past, elsewhere or at the regular held public 'spectacles' significantly contribute to IS' ideational and structural power potential. While the LWRG suggested that military force is implemented to capture resources this analysis shows that it can also be deployed to reach containment.
Bargaining power Capability of actors to control the rules of the game and set agendas, in the sense of their ability to define the political parameters of an agenda	Covert action	Maintaining power with the help of a secret police apparatus (containment) (can also be considered tactic of coercion-pressure)	
	Treaties	No information/not observed	
	Incentives	- Suggested agreement between regime and IS on electricity distribution, guessed to be an inducement for compliance (integration)	
Ideational power Allowing the hegemon to control perceptions of the distributional conformation of society, reinforcing the hegemon's legitimacy	Securitisation	No information/not observed	Material power (violence) used to 'sanction' unacceptable discourses and/or acts, thoughts and speech outside the accepted discourse.
	Knowledge construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public meetings, spread of messages (containment) - Warning people to use water with care (containment) 	
	Sanctioned discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public assassinations, imprisonment, increased taxes, limited or constrained water distribution (as a warning/punishment for disobedience) (containment) - Vilification of other groups (containment) 	
Structural power Tactics can be for e.g. threats of military action, economic sanctions, trade embargoes, espionage and propaganda	Coercion-pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Benefiting from the violent reputation in the seizure of Tishrin Dam and Manbij (~ resource capture) - Threatening people with confiscation of their belongings when they leave (containment) - Threatening people that disobedience will be punished - Providing loyalists with high salaries, better houses and continuous water and energy (containment) - Maintaining power with the help of a secret police apparatus (containment) 	<p>When already full control over resources is obtained, not much is needed to maintain the situation and create containment.</p> <p>The spread of fear and the exploitative potential of a reputation are not discussed in the HH-framework.</p>

6 Conclusion

This research sought to answer the question *how and to whom did the Islamic State distribute water in Manbij*, drawing upon the Framework of Hydro-Hegemony. As the framework was criticised for being state-centric, this research focused on a non-state actor, the Islamic State, and the subnational layer of hydropolitics by focusing on Manbij District in northeast Syria, partly adjacent to the Euphrates River.

As the analysis has shown, water has been distributed unconditionally to loyalists of IS, whereas access to water has been constraint for those who did not swear loyalty to the group. Those constraints mainly relate to the prices of water and make that those who can pay, have access more easily. But also those who have reduced their reliance, for example by drilling wells previous to the arrival of IS, suffer less from the distributional politics of IS.

How this political issue of distribution has been realised is explained by drawing upon the HH-framework. Here I have to take off with the statement that IS is the hegemon in the Euphrates River basin of Manbij, consolidating and maintaining control over water resources, infrastructure and distribution. While not all facets of the framework have been touched upon in this research (e.g. the existing power balance determined by financial support or institutional weaknesses), the accounts of the interviewees did give insights on the power exploited by IS in order to consolidate control and deciding who gets what, when, where and why and who is left out. From the perspective of the interviewees, it appears material power and ideational power are exploited most frequently. But as the analysis has shown, the dimensions are intertwined and material power significantly reinforces ideational power. This can be explained by looking at the reputation of IS. The violence used in the past, elsewhere or at the regular held public ‘spectacles’ have constructed a reputation that has become beneficial for IS. Without this reputation, the group perhaps had to use more material power in order to seize the Tishrin Dam and Manbij District. But as the opposition forces feared ‘the same would happen as had happened elsewhere’, they withdrew. This can perhaps be seen as a realistic evaluation, but I argue that the group’s reputation has become part of the existing power imbalance, ready to be exploited in favour of the hegemon. When actively exploited, this can be seen in the form of threats, particularly expressed during public performances. The threats and accounts on the violence used by IS are believed and taken very serious. In other words, the belief that violence will be used in certain situations is taken for reality. It appears that IS is using violence to shock and awe, rather than solely consolidating control, as can be concluded from the public assassinations taking place as part of public performances in which also speeches are given. In this sense the violence – or rather the threat and fear that it creates – can be seen as processes of *knowledge construction* and *sanctioned discourse*. Together they are tactics of ideational power. In the words of Strange (although she was referring to a power she called *knowledge structure*) this power can be explained as the process in which “the strong implant their ideas, even their self-serving ideology, in the minds of the weak, so that the weak come to sincerely believe that the value-judgements of the strong really are the universally right and true ones” (Zeitoun & Warner 2006, p.443). It can be argued that two ideas were subject to such process, namely the ideology forming the fundamentals of the Caliphate and the idea that resistance or disobedience will be suppressed by great violence. While it appears that citizens did not come to believe that the ideology of IS is indeed the ‘universally right and true one’, people had no doubt about the truth of

being killed, punished or otherwise met with violence if not obeying the rules of IS. In that sense IS has been successful in containing citizens in an asymmetric position in the favour of IS; there seemed to be no alternative discourse than the violent discourse.

The difference between the two narratives and the success of their construction is revealed in the *process* of construction. As said, both discourses are subject of knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse, but one narrative was already constructed with the use of military force, before it became subjected to ideational processes. This is the idea that violence will be used in certain situations, which results from the exploitation of material power and the use of violence and military force in the past, elsewhere and during public performances, leading to a reputation ready to exploit in discursive ways. The ideological ideas on the other hand, are constructed in a discursive process only. Here it also becomes clear how power in one dimension (material power) increases power in the other dimension (ideational power). Material power thus showed pivotal, but without exploiting it with ideational tactics material power would not have such a far-reaching and ingraining effect.

Tactics that have been deployed in Manbij are military force, coercion-pressure, covert actions, knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse. Whether IS used treaties and securitization to consolidate control over water resources could not be said based on the obtained information. The tactics were deployed to create a situation of containment over citizens, consolidate control over water resources, and implement a water resource management plan. I learned that this plan barely focuses on increasing support from local citizens by providing them with (accessible) services, and sustain agriculture and food security for the proclaimed Caliphate. Instead, control over water was used in a bigger plan of generating income. For the citizens of Manbij this felt like a 'financial suppression', with far-reaching socio-economic effects.

Besides answering the question how water was distributed in Manbij under the Islamic State, I believe this research sheds light on some important theoretical matters. Hydro-hegemony largely draws upon constructivist theories. This research shows once again that social reality is constructed, particularly in discursive processes such as knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse. However, despite the constructivist approach, the framework does not assist in interpreting perceptions. As shown in the previous chapter, I think perceptions can tell us more about the perceived (in this research the hegemon) and thus how control is consolidated. Hence it might be good to explore the concept of perception further and in particular how perceptions can be interpreted to benefit the HH-analysis. Furthermore, the research triggers thoughts on ideational power. The discussion above reflects my conviction that IS succeeded to a certain extent in knowledge construction and sanctioned discourse as they made people believe that violence *will* be used in certain situations. However, ideational power refers a certain unawareness of one's *true* interest and *own* value-judgement as well as the process of making people *willing* to comply, as explained in the theory chapter. Hence it can be asked if one can speak of *willingness* in such an extreme situation (I have read no other research using the HH-framework where the consequences of not complying were such a real and extreme threat). Perhaps when the willingness to comply is stronger than the willingness not to comply (considering the consequences), one can talk about success in the implementation ideational power. Furthermore, can we speak of ideational power when the narrative is only about the belief that something will happen, rather than the belief that what will happen is legitimate? In this research I have decided that the outcome of ideational power also includes the first. Finally, I feel the framework would benefit from further exploration of acts of coercion-pressure. Coercion-pressure, which I found is frequently implemented, draws upon all kinds of power but has been categorised structural power as in fact little power is needed in order to execute it (especially threats, but also reputation has been discussed in this light). The framework would benefit from it as such an exploration could clear vagueness and shed light on the interrelatedness of the different power dimensions.

While the data for analysis mainly shed lights on the *outcome* of subnational hydropolitics of the Islamic State, the aim of the research was to create understanding on the *process* of implementation. Despite this discrepancy, the analysis of how and to whom the Islamic State distributed water in Manbij is nevertheless based on the obtained interview data. This explains why the analysis did not go deeper on implementation processes, including for example institutional processes.

Also, as the framework was designed to analyse relations between *co-riparian states* of *transboundary rivers*, it can be asked whether it was still applicable in this situation of a

non-state actor on a *subnational* level consolidating control over *more than water flows* in a transboundary river alone. As Paula Duarte Lopes wrote: “hydro-hegemony analysis, even when domestic dynamics are unravelled... are embedded in a state-centric vision of an international basin, from which it has been difficult to depart from” (Lopes 2012, p.265). However as “a hegemonic analysis needs to explain how predominant states not only gain or keep the upper hand, but also command the acceptance and consent of others” (Warner & Zawahri 2012, p.219), I trust this research succeeded in doing so – at least when replacing ‘states’ with ‘non-state actors’.

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Interviewees

1. Tariq (2016), phone interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 5
2. Qusayr (2016), interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 6
3. Nidal (2016), phone interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 6
4. Khaled (2016), phone interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 7
5. Raghda (2016), interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 7
6. Dima (2016), interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 7
7. Nadia (2016), phone interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 7
8. Adam (2016), interview, power use in water distribution under Islamic State with N. C. E. Schaap and N. Bekkur, April 8